

SECRET SERVICE

BEING THE HAPPENINGS OF A NIGHT IN RICHMOND IN THE SPRING OF 1865

THE PLAY BY WILLIAM GILLETTE; BY CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDGAR BERT SMITH

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SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Varney, wife of a Confederate general, has lost one son and another is dying from wounds. She reluctantly gives her consent for Wilfred, the youngest, to join the army if his father consents. The federalists are making their last assault in an effort to capture Richmond. Edith Varney secures from President Davis a commission for Capt. Thorne, who is just recovering from wounds, as chief of the telegraph at Richmond. Capt. Thorne tells Edith he has been ordered away. She declares he must not go and tells him of the commission from the president. He is strongly agitated and declares he cannot accept. Thorne decides to escape while Edith leaves the room to get the commission, but is prevented by the arrival of Caroline Mifflin. Wilfred's sweetheart, Mr. Arrelford of the Confederate secret service, a rejected suitor of Edith's, detects Jonas, Mrs. Varney's butler, carrying a note from a prisoner in Libby prison. Arrelford suspects it is intended for Thorne. The note reads: "Attack tonight. Plan 1. Use telegraph. Arrelford declares Thorne is a Dumont of the Federal secret service, and that his brother Henry is a prisoner in Libby. Edith refuses to believe and suggests that Thorne be confronted with the prisoner as a test. Caroline and Wilfred collaborate on a letter to the general asking permission for Wilfred to join the army.

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

Wilfred regarded her dubiously. He felt as an author does when he sees his pet periods marked out by the blue pencil of the ruthless editor. "You might leave that out," he began, cutting valiantly at his most cherished and admired phrase. "No," protested Caroline vehemently, "certainly not! That is the best thing in the whole letter."

"That 'damn' is going to cost us seven dollars, you know." "It is worth it," said Caroline, "it is the best thing you have written. Your father is a general in the army, he'll understand that kind of language. What's next? I know there's something now."

"Tom Kitzbridge has gone. He was killed yesterday at Cold Harbor." "I've out that about," she caught her breath, and her eyes fixed themselves once more on that little round hole in the breast of his jacket—"about his being killed."

"But he was killed and so was Johnny Sheldon—I have his uniform, you know."

"I know he was, but you don't have to tell your father," said Caroline, choking up, "you don't have to telegraph him the news, do you?"

"No, of course not, but—" "That's all there is to the letter except the end."

"Why, that leaves it just the same except the part about—" "Yes," said Caroline in despair, "and after all the work we have done."

"Let's try it again," said Wilfred. "No," said Caroline, "there is no use. Everything else has got to stay."

"Well, then, we can telegraph it. It would cost hundreds of dollars."

"Yes, we can telegraph it," said

Caroline determinedly, "you give it to me. I'll get it sent."

"But how are you going to send it?" asked Wilfred, extending the letter.

"Never you mind," answered the girl.

"See here!" the boy cried, "I am not going to have you spend your money, and—"

"There's no danger of that, I haven't any to spend." She took the letter from his hand. "I reckon Douglas Foray'll send it for me. He's in the telegraph office and he'll do most anything for me."

"No," said Wilfred sternly.

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"No," said Wilfred sternly.

"What's the reason he won't?" asked the girl.

"Because he won't."

"What do you care so long as he sends it?"

"Well, I do care and that's enough. I'm not going to have you making eyes at Doug Foray on my account."

"Oh, well," said the girl, blushing. "Of course if you feel that way about it."

"That's the way I feel all right. But you won't give up the idea of helping me, will you, because I feel like that?"

"No," answered Caroline softly. "I'll help you all I can—about that letter, do you mean?"

"Yes, about that letter and about other things, too."

"Give it to me," said the girl, "I will go over it again."

She sat down at the desk, and as she scanned it, Wilfred watched her anxiously. To them Mrs. Varney entered. She had an open letter in one hand and a cap and belt in the other. She stopped in the doorway and motioned for some one in the hall to follow her, and an orderly entered the room. His uniform was covered with dust, his sunburned, grim face was covered with sweat and dust also. He stood in the doorway with the ease of a veteran soldier, that is without the painful effort to be precise or formal which marks the young aspirant for military honors.

"Wilfred," said Mrs. Varney, quickly approaching him, "here is a letter from your father." She extended the paper. "He sent it by his orderly."

Wilfred stepped closer to the older woman while Caroline slowly rose from her chair, her eyes fixed on Mrs. Varney.

"What does he say, mother?" asked Wilfred.

"He says—" answered his mother with measured quietness, and controlling herself with the greatest difficulty, "he tells me that—that you are—" in spite of her tremendous effort, her voice failed her. "Read it yourself, my boy," she whispered pitifully.

The letter was evidently exceedingly brief. A moment put Wilfred in possession of its contents. His mother stood with head averted, Caroline stared with trembling lips, a pale face, and a heaving bosom. It was to the orderly that Wilfred addressed himself.

"I am to go back with you?"

"General's orders, sir," answered the soldier, saluting, "to enter the service. God knows we need everybody now."

"When do we start?" asked Wilfred eagerly, his face flushing as he realized that his fondest desire was now to be gratified.

"As soon as you are ready, sir. I am waiting."

"I am ready now," said Wilfred. He turned to his mother. "You won't mind, mother," he said, his own lips trembling a little for the first time at the sight of her grief.

Mrs. Varney shook her head. She stepped nearer to him, smoothed the hair back from his forehead, and stretched out her arms to him as if she felt would embrace him, but she controlled herself and handed him the cap and belt.

"Your brother," she said slowly, "seems to be a little better. He wants you to take his cap and belt. I told him your father had sent for you, and I knew you would wish to go to the front at once."

Wilfred took the belt from her trembling hands, and buckled it about him. His mother handed him the cap.

"Howard says he can get another belt when he wants it, and you are to have his blankets, too. I will go and get them."

She turned and left the room. She was nearly at the end of her restraining power, and but for the welcome diversion incident to her departure, she could not have controlled herself longer. The last one! One taken, one trembling, and now Wilfred!

The boy entered into none of the emotions of his mother. He clasped the cap on his head and threw it back.

"Fits me just as if it were made for me," he said, settling the cap firmly in place. "Orderly, I will be with you in a jiffy."

Caroline stood still near the table, her eyes on the floor.

"We won't have to send it now, will we?" he pointed to the letter.

Caroline, with a long, deep sigh, shook her head, and slowly handed the letter to him. Wilfred took it mechanically, his eyes fixed on the girl, who had suddenly grown very white of face, trembles of lips, and tears of eyes.

"You are very good," he said, tearing the letter into pieces, "to help me like you did."

"It was nothing," whispered the girl. "You can help me again, if you want to."

Caroline lifted her eyes to his face, and he saw within their depths that which encouraged him.

"I can help twice as well, if—" Poor little Caroline couldn't trust herself to speak. She nodded through her tears.

"Good-bye," said Wilfred, "you will write to me about helping me to fight twice as well, won't you. You know what I mean?"

Caroline nodded again.

"I wouldn't mind if you telegraphed me that you would."

What might have happened further will never be determined, for at this juncture Mrs. Varney came back with an old faded blanket tied in a roll. She handed it to the boy without speaking. Wilfred threw it over his shoulder, and kissed his mother hurriedly.

You won't mind much, will you, mother. I will soon be back. Orderly!" he cried.

"Sir."

"I am ready," said Wilfred. He threw one long, meaning look at Caroline, and followed the soldier out of the door and across the hall. The opening and closing of an outside door was heard, and then all was still. Mrs. Varney held her hand to her heart, and long, shuddering breaths came from her. He might soon be back, but how. She knew all about the famous injunction of the Spartan woman, "With your shield or on it," but somehow she had no idea of the full significance until it came to her last boy, and for a moment she was forgetful of poor, little Caroline until she saw the girl wavering toward the door, and there was no disguise about the real tears in her eyes now.

"Are you going, dear?" asked Mrs. Varney, forcing herself to speak.

Caroline nodded her head as before.

"Oh, yes," continued the older woman, "your party, you have to be there."

At that the girl found voice, and without looking back she murmured: "There won't be any party tonight."

CHAPTER VIII.

Edith is Forced to Play the Game. Caroline's departure was again interrupted by the inopportune re-entrance from the back hall of Mr. Arrelford, who was accompanied by two soldiers, whom he directed to remain by the door. As he advanced rapidly toward Mrs. Varney, Caroline stepped aside toward the rear window.

"In he—" began Arrelford, turning toward the window, and starting back in surprise as he observed Caroline for the first time.

"Yes, he is there," answered the woman.

"Oh, Mrs. Varney," cried Caroline, "there's a heap of soldiers out in your back yard here. You don't reckon anything's the matter, do you?"

The girl did not lower her voice, and was greatly surprised at the immediate order for silence which proceeded from Mr. Arrelford, whose presence she acknowledged with a very cool, indifferent bow.

"No, there is nothing the matter, dear," said Mrs. Varney. "Martha," she said to the old servant who had come in response to her ring, "I want you to go home with Miss Mifflin. You must not go alone, dear. Good night."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Varney," answered Caroline. "Come Martha." As she turned, she hesitated. "You don't reckon she could go with me somewhere else, do you?"

"Why, where else do you want to go at this hour, my dear girl?" asked Mrs. Varney.

"Just to—the telegraph office," answered Caroline.

Mr. Arrelford, who had been waiting with ill-concealed impatience during this dialogue, started violently.

"Now!" exclaimed Mrs. Varney in great surprise, not noticing the actions of her latest guest. "At this time of night?"

"Yes," answered Caroline, "it is on very important business, and—"

"Oh," returned Mrs. Varney, "if that is the case, Martha must go with you."

"You know we haven't a single servant left at our house," Caroline said in explanation of her request.

"I know," said Mrs. Varney, "and Martha don't leave her for an instant."

"No," answered Martha. "Ah! take an' ob huh."

As soon as she had left the room, passing between the two soldiers, Arrelford took up the conversation. He spoke quickly and in a sharp voice. He was evidently greatly excited.

"What is she going to do at the telegraph office?" he asked.

"I have no idea," answered the woman.

Beautiful Nerve. Yeast—According to a Berlin nerve specialist knitting in bed is an excellent antidote for tired nerves.

Crimespeak—Well, I should say that the fellow who spent any time knitting in bed would have a beautiful nerve.

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"Has she had any conversation with him?" said Arrelford, pointing to the front of the house.

"They were talking together in this room early this evening before you came this first time, but it isn't possible she could—"

"Anything is possible," snapped Arrelford impatiently. He was evidently determined to suspect everybody, and leave no stone unturned to prevent the failure of his plans. "Corporal," he cried, "have Huddinger follow that girl. He must get to the telegraph office as soon as she does, and don't let any dispatch she tries to send get out before I see it. Let her give it in, but hold it. Make no mistake about that. Get an order from the department for you to bring it to me."

As the corporal saluted and turned away to give the order, Arrelford faced Mrs. Varney again. "Are they both out there?"

"Yes," answered the woman. "Did you bring the man from Libby prison?"

"I did, the guards have him out in the street on the other side of the house. When we get Thorne in here alone I'll have him brought over to that window and shoved into the room."

"And where shall I stay?"

"Out there," said Arrelford, "by the lower door, opening upon the back hall. You can get a good view of everything from there."

"But if he sees me?"

"He won't see you if it is dark in the hall." He turned to the corporal who had re-entered and resumed his station. "Turn out those lights out

there, he said. "We can close these curtains, can't we?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Varney, opening the rear door and drawing the heavy portieres, but leaving space between them so that anyone in the dark hall could see through them but not be seen from the room.

"I don't want too much light in here, either," said Arrelford. As he spoke he blew out the candles in the two candelabra which had been placed on the different tables, and left the large, long room but dimly illuminated by the candles in the sconces on the walls.

Mrs. Varney watched him with fascinated awe. In spite of herself there still lingered a hope that Arrelford might be mistaken. Thorne had enlisted her interest, and he might under other conditions have aroused her maternal affections, and she was hoping against hope that he might yet prove himself innocent, not only because of his personality but as well because the thought that she might have entertained a spy was repugnant to her, and because of the honor of the Dumont family, which was one of the oldest and most important ones in the western hills of the Old Dominion.

Arrelford meantime completed his preparations by moving the couch which Caroline Mifflin had placed before the window back to the wall.

"Now, Mrs. Varney," he said, stepping far back out of sight of the window, "will you open the curtains? Do it casually, carelessly, please, so as not to awaken any suspicion if you are seen."

"But your soldiers, won't they?"

"They are all at the back of the house. They came in the back way, and the field in front is absolutely clear, although I have men concealed in the street to stop anyone who may attempt to escape that way."

Mrs. Varney walked over to the window and drew back the curtains. She stood for a moment looking out into the clear, peaceful quietness of a soft spring night. The moon was full and being somewhat low shone through the long windows and lit the room, the candle light not being bright enough to dim the radiance. Her task being completed, she turned, and once more the man who was in command pointed across the hall toward the room on the other side.

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